TO CHEAT OF NOT TO CHEAT: THE STRATEGIC DECISION OF ELECTORAL FRAUD IN COMPETITIVE AUTOCRACIES.

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Acknowledgements

I joined the Political Science Department at NUS as an overzealous student with no specific research agenda. Half way through the gruelling seminars on research methodology and comparative politics, my enthusiasm was partially replaced by a longing to find my place in the discipline. I questioned my ideas, my intelligence and even my interest in the discipline on several occasions during my academic journey. Thankfully, researching on this thesis has served as an epiphany; it has made me discover my true academic inclinations and research interests. The rigorous process of research and writing has definitely polished my intellect and has been the most rewarding academic experience of my life.

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Abstract

Why does pressure to hold free and fair elections by the opposition prevent some competitive autocrats from stealing elections but not others? My paper illustrates how extent of power-sharing in the autocratic party determines the decision to either refrain from ballot-rigging or try to cling to power through electoral fraud when the opposition can credibly threaten a massive civil disobedience against tainted elections. I argue that diffused power in the ruling party/high power-sharing amongst party elites makes the autocrat refrain from electoral rigging, even at the risk of losing, when there is a high threat that the opposition will lead a large-scale civil disobedience to challenge tainted election results. While in the case of concentrated power in the ruling party/low power-sharing amongst party elites the autocrat will rig elections to cling to power even when there is a high threat of civil disobedience following suit. I analyze the contrasting cases of the Socialist Party of Serbia and Institutional Republican Party in Mexico to test my theory.

Introduction

During the Third Wave of Democratization, electoral autocrats responded in different ways to domestic pressure for free and fair elections. In 1994 the revolutionary Zapatista army, which had initiated a leftist armed rebellion in many parts of Mexico, demanded free and fair elections from the authoritarian government. This challenge emboldened institutionalized civil society and led to Mexico's opposition parties jointly signing a pact for pushing electoral reforms. President Ernesto Zedillo of the dominant Institutional Republic Party (PRI), conceded by creating an independent Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) before presidential elections of 1994. The IFE had previously been under government's control and thus had often been accused of manipulating of votes to guarantee the PRI's electoral victory by opposition groups. This breakthrough in electoral reform was to symbolize the government's willingness to hold clean elections by detaching itself from control of the electoral process.

Conversely, the demand for free and fair elections made by the united opposition in Serbia was not heeded by President Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). The call for clean elections was vociferously put forward at a large protest rally attended by nearly 200,000 citizens in the capital city of Belgrade five months before the 2000 presidential elections.[1] However, the government still engaged in widespread electoral which instigated opposition parties and thousands of their supporters to come out on the streets to challenge election results. Subsequently this triggered the defection of the armed forces from the

[1] See Goati 2000, 45-59

authoritarian government and fresh elections which brought the opposition candidate Vojislav Koštunica to power.

Why does pressure to hold free and fair elections by the opposition prevent some competitive autocrats from stealing elections[2] but not others?

Unlike democratic elections, those held in authoritarian regimes are typically *neither free nor fair*. Schedler highlights the "menu of manipulation" that autocrats avail to control elections. Dictators determine *rules of the electoral game* through restrictions on civil and political liberties and electoral laws which give incumbents an unfair advantage in the electoral arena. And through vote-buying, intimidation of political opponents and voters and manipulation of the vote-count, autocrats control the *game of elections* itself. [3]

Since autocrats control elections in myriad ways to ensure that they emerge victorious at the polls, opposition parties are meant to lose elections.[4] However, elections in *competitive authoritarian regimes* are not clear games of contestation which always yield predictable results. While autocrats control the rules of the electoral game, the opposition parties control the legitimacy of elections.[5] Unlike *hegemonic authoritarian regimes*, where opposition only exists at the margins of the political system and elections are simply a procedural activity (like in Singapore, Uzbekistan) the opposition in competitive autocracies (for instance, Mexico during the 1990s, Egypt since the 1990s) has the capacity to defeat the

[2] Stealing refers to electoral fraud or annulment of election by the incumbent regime to maintain its control.
[3] Schedler 2002a, 36-50 and 2002b, 105-108; Birch 2009, 395-410; Case 2009, 95-112
[4] See section on opposition parties in Schedler 2009, 381-394
[5] See Schedler 2002b, 113. Schedler conceives of democratization through elections should as a nested game – at the meta-game level autocrats controls the electoral rules, while major choices for opposition actors are at the game level of electoral competition.

authoritarian incumbents. This makes electoral cheating even more necessary for autocrats to ensure their victory.[6]

Yet paradoxically so, electoral rigging can potentially be a risky decision when a relatively strong opposition can threaten to challenge election results. For example, Fabrice Lehoucq and Ivan Molina in their detailed study on electoral fraud in Costa Rica find out that as inter-party competition rose, paradoxically parties faced more incentives to "denounce and commit fraud".[7] Similarly Dominguez and McCann in their study of electoral fraud under the PRI in Mexico argue that accusations against fraud were more common in the more competitive urban areas.[8] Thompson and Kuntz argue that stolen elections can be a focal point for channelling public dissent because it creates an "imagined community" of robbed voters.[9] And Joshua Tucker argues that even though ordinary citizens might not challenge the regime due to collective action problems in everyday life, electoral fraud radically alters the individual's calculus about partaking in protests to dislodge an unpopular regime.[10]

This thesis explains why certain competitive autocrats take the risky decision of electoral rigging while others do not, when faced with similar pressure from the opposition to hold free and fair elections. Due to the remarkable durability of electoral autocracies, there has been considerable scholarly interest in studying the role of electoral fraud in the preserving the dominance of autocratic parties.[11]

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[6] See Levitsky and Way, 2000 on differences between authoritarian regimes which hold elections.
[7] Lehoucq and Molina cited in Schedler 2002b, 116.
[8] Domınguez and McCann 1996, 269
[9] Thompson and Kuntz 2004, 162
[10] Tucker 2007, 540-542
[11] See Schedler and Birch, 2009; Also see Magaloni 2006, Ch. 8 and 2010, 751–765

My argument illustrates how diffusion/concentration of decision-making power (or high/low power-sharing) in the ruling party affects the autocrat's choice to either refrain from ballot-rigging or steal elections when there is a threat that tainted elections will cause mass protests. Variation in power-sharing is the independent variable explaining why the threat of mass revolt by the opposition will make some autocrats refrain from ballot rigging but not others.

Autocratic parties with diffused power or high power-sharing amongst elites are more likely to respond to the credible threat of post-election challenges by abstaining from electoral fraud. For party elites losing elections peacefully without electoral manipulation actually has a higher payoff than that for inciting mass protests through ballot-rigging which can instigate the defection of the armed forces and in turn fresh elections. In this scenario, the party stands to lose **legitimacy** which can cause the defection of its voters and party members thereby threatening its disintegration and demise of political careers of party members. Whereas losing elections still allows the party to have some access to state resources and control over policy-making due to some legislative representation. Thus by avoiding tampering with votes, such a ruling party will serve the collective interest of party elites i.e. maintaining party legitimacy and cohesiveness.

On the contrary, parties with concentration of power or low power-sharing amongst elites are less likely to be receptive to the likelihood of a mass challenge by the opposition in the aftermath of electoral cheating. Due to the centralized nature of decision-making in the party, the dictator cannot be stopped from rigging elections in spite of a high probability of mass conflict. This is because for the dictator and his loyalists the payoffs for losing "clean" elections are the same as that for inciting mass conflict through electoral fraud which leads

to the defection of the armed forces and fresh elections. Both result in the worst-case scenario of the loss of the highest political office and legal impunity for the top leader. Therefore the party with low power-sharing is more likely to take the risk of rigging elections so that the top leader can cling to power, even if there is formidable pressure from the opposition to hold free and fair elections.

My study endeavours to be an important addition to the burgeoning literature on electoral authoritarianism and democratization. Regular elections have played an important role in durability of authoritarian regimes because they are an important institutional mechanism through which members of society can become part of or sustain membership in the ruling authoritarian coalition and thus have access to perks, rents and other state resources.[12] However elections in competitive autocracies are not an easy win for incumbents; they are rather strategic affairs during which incumbents' decisions have to carefully anticipate the opposition's response to techniques of electoral manipulation. A fascinating string of "coloured revolutions" in Serbia (2000), Ukraine (2002), Georgia (2003) and Kyrgyzstan (2004) in the new millennium has shown how ordinary citizens have the capacity to challenge and bring down authoritarian governments which blatantly manipulated elections. Yet at the same time other electoral autocrats in Mexico (1994), Senegal (2000) and Kenya (2002) behaved in a more prudent manner when faced with a strong opposition demanding free and fair elections.

There is no convincing theoretical explanation of why some competitive autocrats risked mass conflict in their drive to cling to power through extensive ballot-rigging while others

[12] See Lisa Blaydes, 2006 and Beatriz Magaloni 2008, 195-218 for an analysis on politics of rent distribution in authoritarian regimes

preferred losing clean elections. This paper will explain what conditions will make certain electoral autocrats give up power to opposition forces to allow "liberalizing electoral outcomes"[13] or an "electoral alternations"[14] but not others.

Methodology and case selection

My method consists of analyzing small-*n* case studies of elections under competitive autocracies. My case selection seeks variation on my independent and dependent variables. Since I am aiming to explain why autocratic elites faced with the same social conditions behave in different ways, I use the "congruence method" of case study. In the congruence method, a theory providing deductive hypotheses or empirical generalizations for how variation in the independent variable leads to the variation of the dependent variable is empirically tested without the need to trace the exact process.[15] This method is suitable for my research because dynamics of elite decision-making – like motivations of leaders, intra-elite bargaining - is often veiled from public scrutiny and the exact causal process linking the independent to the dependent variable cannot be unambiguously traced. Therefore using a decision-making tree in my theoretical framework, I show why rational leaders strategically choose from alternative courses of action and make some predictive deductions. I use my cases to then test these deductions which explain the variation in rational behaviour of elites constrained by similar environment.

As I have explained above my theory is only applicable to competitive autocracies where opposition is an important force in politics. Hegemonic autocracies –where opposition simply exists at the margins are not the focal point of my research. I use the following

[13] Howard and Roessler 2006, 443-455
[14] Wahman 2010
[15] George and Bennett 2005, Ch 9

measurements to differentiate between competitive and hegemonic party regimes: a) the ruling party does not have a supermajority in the parliament b) there is a major mainstream opposition party or an opposition coalition.

While I am only focussing on two main case-studies, my theory can be applied to strategic behaviour of most competitive autocrats in the electoral arena. Autocrats which gave up power through electoral turnovers during the Third Wave of Democracy, displayed fascinating divergence in strategic behaviour during elections. Faced by a growing opposition, many autocratic parties minimized electoral cheating by undertaking electoral reforms to make polls more free and fair. The PRI in Mexico and the Socialist Party (SP) in Senegal during the 1990s are two clear examples. Kuomintang (KMT) in Taiwan, also undertake electoral reforms to increase electoral competition and decrease electoral corruption (like vote-buying) during the 1990s. Yet autocrats in Eastern Europe and Central Asia blatantly rigged elections in spite of third-party electoral administration and high mobilization of the opposition.[16] My theory can be applied to explain discrepancy in autocratic behaviour across these different cases.

My two main case studies of elections under the PRI in Mexico (1994-2000) and under Socialist Party of Serbia in Serbia (2000) seek variation on the independent variable and dependent variable**.** Through analyses of these cases, I aim to infer how differences in autocratic power structures causally relate to differences in rational decision-making in the electoral arena. In my cases I also try to highlight how *change* in the strength of the opposition altered strategic decision-making for some autocrats but not others to confirm

[16] See McFail 2005, 5-19 for a study of transitions in Post-communist Europe.

the impact of my independent variable on the decision to commit or refrain from electoral fraud.

I have three significant reasons for choosing my main case-studies. Firstly, since I conceive of my independent variable in dichotomous terms – concentration as opposed to diffusion of power in the ruling party – these clearly contrasting cases are ideal for allowing highest variation on the independent variable. The PRI in Mexico - the longest ruling autocrat of the twentieth century –probably had the most diffused structure of intra-party power-sharing in the world. Every five years there was rotation of the Presidency. This institutionalized setup of rank-and-file promotion to the highest office was supposed to thwart concentration of power; to prevent personalistic interests taking precedence over party interests and also to allow new incumbents to effectively deal with new challenges in the changing environment. The case of the SPS in Serbia is an example of an extreme concentration of power in the office of the presidency. During the 1990s Milosevic held the sole prerogative to hire fire and promote party personnel in the SPS without adequate accountability. *Serbia is also a case where the first coloured revolution happened in Eastern Europe. This effectively ensures that the mass protests which resulted after rigging of elections, was not caused by a "demonstration effect" due to earlier precedents in neighbouring countries.*

These two cases can be classified as "least likely" cases thus making them highly relevant for theory-testing.[17] As one military regime had fallen one after another in major countries of South America in the 1980s, the authoritarian party-led regime in Mexico had shown no signs of weakening. Unlike regime change experienced in many countries during the three

[17] Levy 2002, 432-455

waves of democratization, Mexico's democratization was "elusive" because it did not register a critical juncture which can be identified as a categorical break from the authoritarian legacy of the past.[18] In many ways, the amazing longevity and strong institutional roots of hegemonic-party rule had made democratization seem like a remote possibility in Mexico. Yet even seventy years of rule, the PRI surprisingly created an independent body for monitoring elections and then subsequently peacefully accepted defeat through clean elections.

While in Serbia, Milosevic's audacity to rig elections and deny the opposition its legitimate electoral victory appears most surprisingly in the context of the domestic and international environment. There was strong domestic pressure for clean elections, which can be measured in terms of opposition-led mass demonstrations for holding free and fair polls. Milosevic's unpopularity was on an all-time high. At the same time, due to Milosevic's conspicuous involvement in instigating the ethnic genocides in Bosnia and Kosovo, the international community was keen to witness the electoral ouster of the repressive Serbian President. The EU had given extensive financial assistance to the independent media, civic groups and opposition parties of Serbia and EU observers were present to monitor the electoral process. Such high mobilization of the populace were indicators of the very strong possibility that the regime will not risk electoral fraud and allow an electoral turnover but still Milosevic refused to loosen his grip over power.

[18] See Whitehead 1995, 246—269 regarding the gradual demise of the dominant party system in Mexico.

Roadmap

In the following section of this thesis, I will be discussing alternative explanations for my research question and their respective weaknesses. I will then introduce my own theoretical framework comprising my hypothesis, conceptualization and measurements in a separate section. In the fourth section of this thesis, I will test my theory by analyzing my case-studies. Lastly, I will conclude by summarizing the findings of my study and analyze its implications on the current state of literature.

Alternative Explanations

Alternative Explanation 1: The threat of mass conflict ex ante determines whether competitive autocrats choose to rig elections or not.

Magaloni argues that threat of a mass conflict can strategically deter autocrats from rigging elections. She refers to mass conflict as a situation of *a large-scale civil disobedience* and this can refer to rallies, demonstrations, protests and even include armed challenges against the regime.[19] According to Magaloni, rigged elections can lead to a situation of a mass conflict if a strong opposition challenges election results through massive civil disobedience. This can instigate the intervention of the armed forces, which can either defect to the side of the opposition by calling for fresh elections or support the regime and shoot on the opposition. Therefore the autocrat's decision to rig elections when the strong opposition has the potential to contest tainted electoral results heightens the risk of military intervention with the consequent possibility of military defection. Thus autocrats are likely to act in a cautious way when the threat of mass conflict is credible.[20]

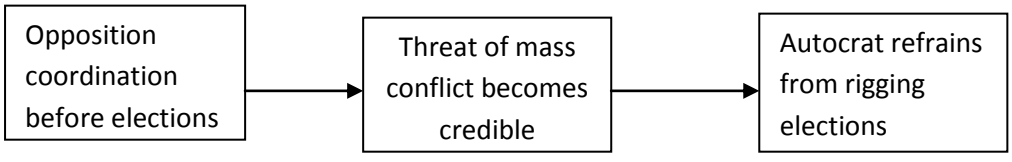
Magaloni and Howard and Roessler argue that opposition coordination prior to elections is a credible indicator of a mass conflict if the autocrat seriously tampers electoral results.[21] Magaloni argues that *opposition unity* before elections – measured as opposition groups forming electoral coalitions between elections or collectively endorsing the presidential candidate– can prevent autocrats from engaging in electoral fraud because it makes the

[19] The terms mass conflict/mass challenge/large-scale civil disobedience have been used interchangeably throughout the paper.
[20] Magaloni 2010, 751–765
[21] Ibid; Howard & Roessler, 2006

threat of mass conflict credible *ex ante*. Magaloni asserts that in presidential systems like Senegal and Kenya in 2000 and 2002, opposition coalitions supporting a common presidential candidate formed *ex ante* threatened a mass conflict in case of major electoral fraud by the authoritarian incumbents.[22]

Howard and Roessler argue that formation of a collective opposition front can prevent autocrats from using "divide and rule" strategy to play opposition groups against one to survive in power. Therefore, it becomes difficult for the autocrat to collude with certain opposition groups to engage in abuse of the electoral process. Also a strong collective opposition increases the perceived costs of repression and manipulation of elections. If the security services realize that the opposition can credibly oust the dictator, the possibility of *ex post* castigation can prevent these institutions from aiding the incumbent.[23] Through statistical analysis, Howard and Roessler show that emergence of opposition coalitions before elections greatly increase the chance of defeat of the incumbent, leading to a liberalizing electoral outcome (LEO). [24] **Figure 1** depicts this mechanism, which prevents autocrats from stealing elections:

Fig. 1



[22] Magaloni, 759
[23] Howard and Roessler, 371
[24] Ibid. 375-376

While this explanation makes logical sense, it does not elucidate variation in empirical cases. Keeping the condition of a credible opposition revolt constant in all cases, some autocrats were *willing* to hold clean elections others were not. However due to the variation in actions of different autocrats in the electoral arena in response to the threat of mass conflict, it is clearly not the *independent variable*.

For example, the actions of the PRI in Mexico reflected a high commitment to institutional procedures implying that some autocrats will actually *refrain* from manipulation of elections when faced with a rising opposition, even if it leads to their electoral ouster. Magaloni stresses that the PRI in Mexico was willing to give independence to the IFE in 1994 to assure opposition groups of clean elections *only* because it was sure that it could win clean elections.[25] However subsequently when the Peso crisis hit the country in 1994 and caused the government's popularity to plummet before elections, it still it did not resort to unconstitutional or repressive measures to reverse its decision to guarantee victory at the polls. This is contrary to some of the actions that other autocrats have taken to cling to power. In 2000, when Milosevic lost the first round of elections in spite of electoral fraud, his influence over the constitutional court made it annul election results.

Another point worth emphasizing is that the threat of mass conflict in the Mexican case was relatively *moderate*. There was no opposition unity preceding 1994 elections – the two main opposition parties, rightist National Action Party (PAN) and leftist PRD (Revolutionary Democratic Party) (which could have potentially allied with the Zapatista revolutionaries in case the government manipulated elections) were ideologically divided. Still, the autocratic

[25] Magaloni 2005, 132-133.

PRI was highly sensitive to a relatively modest threat of mass conflict ensuing manipulated elections.

On the contrary, there are several examples of competitive autocrats who blatantly manipulated elections in spite of a *very high risk* of an opposition revolt. In Serbia (2000), and Ukraine (2002) especially not only was there opposition unity before elections; there was also very high mobilization of civil society. Moreover, the presence of independent electoral monitoring during the colored revolution cases compounded the risk of mass conflict because incident of electoral manipulation could be unambiguously disseminated to the public.

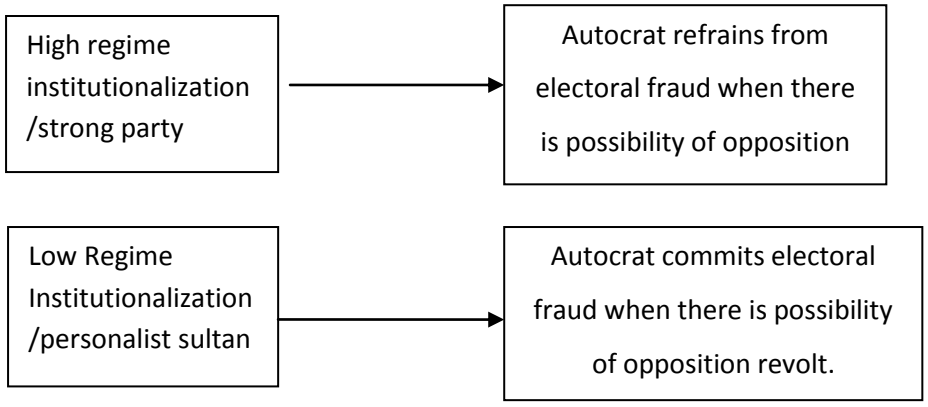
Alternative Explanation 2: Institutionalization of regime determines whether autocrats steal elections or not.

Thompson and Kuntz in a brief chapter highlight some of the reasons why dictators steal elections. According to them a) fear of legal consequences b) economic motives and c) political motives are potential reasons for dictators opting to not give up their hold on power. Dictators who often abuse power while in office fear that renouncing their power would lead to new governments punishing them by taking them to court. Secondly, the fear of losing economic privileges and perks also drives most dictators to cling to their positions of authority for e.g. Thirdly, political factors such as the possibility of losing all means of accessing public office also induces dictators to steal elections. Thompson and Kuntz also mention that psychological and ideological factors might also play a role in leaders wanted to sustain their rule despite electoral failure.[26]

[26] Thompson and Kuntz 2006, Ch. 7

They argue that the legal, economic and political motives that they highlight can be subsumed under the causal variable of electoral sultanism. They corroborate Chehabi and Linz and Geddes' explanation that the less the institutionalized a regime, the less likely are the chances of it giving up power with ease.[27] Personalist dictators like Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines stood to lose all their perks and privileges, which was a plausible reason why they chose not to relinquish their grip on power. However well-institutionalized political parties can hope to come to power in the future so are more willing to peacefully allow the transition of power once they lose elections.[28] **Figure 2** diagrammatically highlights their mechanism:

Fig. 2



Thomas and Kuntz's hypothesis is more convincing than Magaloni's and Howard and Roessler's explanation described above because it is able to explain the variance in autocratic behaviour, keeping the potential for opposition rebellion in the aftermath constant in different empirical cases. However, this explanation has some important deficiencies. Firstly, the institutionalization of the regime – the strong party in contrast with personalist sultan – which Thomas and Kuntz identify as their independent variable is

[27] Geddes 1999; Chehabi and Linz 1998, 33-49
[28] Thompson and Kuntz, 121-123

problematic for explaining differentiation of dictatorial response. They should have explained what aspect of institutionalization of the regime has a casual effect on strategic decision-making of the autocrat in the electoral arena. Strong parties like the Socialist Party of Serbia which had inherited material assets, grass-roots support and large membership from its predecessor communist predecessor, were still involved in widespread electoral cheating in 2000 elections in the country which ultimately led to a citizen revolt. The high degree of institutionalization of the Socialist Party of Serbia is a point that Thompson and Kuntz acknowledge themselves. They contrast the Socialist Party of Serbia with the weakly institutionalized *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* under Marcos which quickly disintegrated after the opposition contestation of electoral results led to the defection of the armed forces.[29] Yet both these parties were implicated in massive electoral fraud which caused the Yellow and Bulldozer Revolutions in Philippines (1986) and Serbia (2000) respectively.

Secondly, Thompson and Kuntz's explanation lacks an exact causal mechanism in how opposition dynamics divergently impacts strategic calculations of competitive autocrats which risk facing mass demonstrations. By not focussing on this aspect, their hypothesis – that strongly institutionalized dictatorships are more likely to give up power when they lose elections – downplays the unwillingness of *all* dictatorial regimes to surrender power, notwithstanding their level of institutionalization.

It is merely not the hope of coming to power in the future that makes autocratic parties give up electoral power. In fact many dictatorial regimes which peacefully allowed an electoral turnover of power during the Third Wave of Democratization had previously engaged in extensive malpractice (often at times at the expense of rioting and demonstrations by the

[29] Ibid. 122

opposition) in an attempt to maintain their grip on power. How does a burgeoning opposition change a cheating incumbent's strategic calculation? After all losing hegemonic authority to the opposing party can potentially imply that the latter will use the same institutional structures of the state that the former incumbents did to keep the latter out of power. This is exactly what has happened in most West African countries like Senegal and Ghana where the opposition after coming in power has used semi-authoritarian structures to maintain their hold in power and often deny the former ruling party a fair game at the polls.[30] What is it about the threat of mass protests by a strong opposition that causes some autocratic parties from manipulating the vote count?

And some rulers manipulate the vote-count in spite of the possibility of mass protests will inevitably pressure them to relinquish power. According to Thompson and Kuntz, "electoral sultans" fear losing all their economic and political benefits and facing legal consequence and thus cling to power by stealing elections. But then why do they take this chance when there is a potential risk that they will ultimately fall from grace through popular revolt? Thus Thompson and Kuntz's explanation fails to show how and why popular pressure differently affects motivations and actions of autocrats.

[30] See Jourde 2008, Ch. 5

Theoretical framework

My theory is superior to Magaloni's and Howard and Roessler's because it holds the threat of mass conflict in the event of electoral rigging *constant* in all cases to identify the actual independent variable causing the differentiation in autocratic behavior. The argument I posit is similar to Thompson and Kuntz's explanation because it is also concerned with regime institutionalization. However, I concentrate on the specific aspect of institutionalization of power-sharing instead of relying on the simplistic dichotomy of the strong party as opposed to a personalist sultan. My explanation, unlike theirs, also seeks to provide a causally nuanced understanding of how difference in power structures impacts autocratic decision-making with reference to electoral cheating, when there is the probability of an opposition rebellion.

Hypothesis: When the opposition can launch a large-scale civil disobedience to challenge fraudulent elections, diffusion or concentration of power in the ruling party will determine the decision to rig elections or not.

Variation in the *level of power-sharing* in the competitive autocracy determines whether autocrats rig elections or not when the threat of a massive civil disobedience ensuing fraudulent elections is high. **Diffusion of power** in the autocratic party (or high power-sharing amongst party elites) acts as an impediment against ballot-rigging when there are indicators that the opposition is strong enough to launch a large-scale civic disobedience. By avoiding tampering with votes, the autocrat will serve the collective interest of party members of maintaining party legitimacy and cohesiveness. Autocratic parties with diffused

power-sharing fear a situation of mass conflict in the aftermath of tampered electoral results can potentially cause the defection of the armed forces and subsequent fresh elections that result in a heavy loss of legitimacy for the party causing mass defections of voters and party-members.

Whereas **concentration of power** (low power-sharing amongst party elites) within the autocratic party implies that there are few checks and balances against the top leader's motives to engage in risky behaviour to preserve his own personal power at the expense of party legitimacy and cohesiveness. Thus even when faced with the threat of mass conflict, the dictator and his clique of loyalists will prefer to rig elections to cling to power.

Conceptualization and measurement

I conceive of power in a competitive autocracy as a dichotomous variable. **Diffusion of power-sharing** is represented by rotation in top leadership at most after two terms, constitutional checks constraining the presidency, institutionalized procedures of rank-and-file promotion in the authoritarian party. These rules constrain personalist whim of the ruler by giving precedence to party's interests rather personalist interest of the top leader. **Concentration of power** is represented by the following indicators: protracted rule by the top leader (mostly beyond the two-term period), lack of constitutional checks and balances curbing the top leader, violation of rank-and-file promotion by top leadership within the authoritarian party.[31]

[31] These indicators have adapted from Barbara Geddes' indicators used to differentiate between personalist and dominant party regimes in Geddes 2003,225 and 227

I use the terms mass conflict and mass challenge interchangeably in the paper. Both refer to the incidence of a large-scale civil disobedience, as I have already explained earlier.[32] The **threat of mass conflict by the opposition** can be assessed by the following indicators representing domestic pressure for clean elections: a) **opposition unity** – opposition parties forming electoral coalitions before elections or jointly endorsing a presidential candidate or b) **protests/mass demonstrations/revolutionary challenge** before elections.

As has been explained above in the section on alternative explanations, a collective opposition front before elections makes difficult for the autocrat to strike bargains with selective opposition groups in exchange for their consent in electoral manipulation. It also increases the perceived threat of a joint opposition challenge if the autocrat chooses to cling to power by manipulating elections.

Civic challenges - such as mass protests, demonstrations or rebellions by the opposition and civil society - against the authoritarian state before elections indicate the high probability of collective action against the autocrat if the latter chooses to rig elections.

Diffused power in competitive autocracies: explaining the decision to defraud elections

For the authoritarian party characterized by diffusion of power/ high power-sharing, the worst possible scenario is disintegration of the party. This is because individual factions/blocs within an autocratic party (just as parties in democratic regimes) need to ensure institutional cohesiveness of the party in order to have access to state power and resources.

[32] See footnote 19.

Using game theory, Geddes elucidates that policy differences may arise in single parties but the **rival faction** will still find it more advantageous to cooperate with the **dominant faction** (the leader's faction) rather than break away from the party and try to access state resources by playing the opposition.[33] This dichotomy into a dominant and rival faction might come across as simplistic but it is an excellent way of explaining why moments of succession to top leadership in dominant parties often generate party splits. The faction whose candidate does not make it to top office then has an incentive to breaks away. Good examples of intra-party discord are the PRI in Mexico, KMT in Taiwan and KANU in Kenya, which have been historically prone to splits during times of leadership succession.[34] Additionally, the inter-generational conflict in parties – the tension between "old guard" and "new guard" – as was evident in the PRI in the 1990s and in National Democratic Party in Egypt during the new millennium[35] highlights the factionalism that exists within dominant parties.

While factionalism can be a key feature of parties where elites share power, in such parties the dominant faction finds it unfeasible to marginalize the rival faction and has to appease it through concessions. Barbara Geddes (1999) explains internal cohesiveness of single-party regimes by highlighting that autocratic parties consist of disparate societal factions cooperating under the umbrella of the single-party rather.[36] This represents a classic "the whole being bigger than the sum of the parts" scenario, where individual factions within the party do not have autonomous political influence and need to use the collective party

[33] See the section: "The Interests of Cadres in Single-Party Regimes" in Geddes 1999
[34] Magaloni 2006, p.17
[35] This example holds true only before popular protests dislodged President Mubarak's regime in 2011 leading to the demise of the ruling NDP.
[36] Refer to footnote 19

umbrella to access state resources and power. The political careers of party-members are contingent on the unity of the party structure and the worst possible outcome for them would be disintegration of the party. This institutional configuration of the dominant party makes *cooperation* imperative for members of political parties.

This probably explains the longevity of political parties with institutionalized power-sharing in not just authoritarian regimes but also democratic regimes. These parties are usually adept at managing internal conflict resolution and generational change even during periods of political turmoil because survival of the party is in the interest of all party factions.[37]

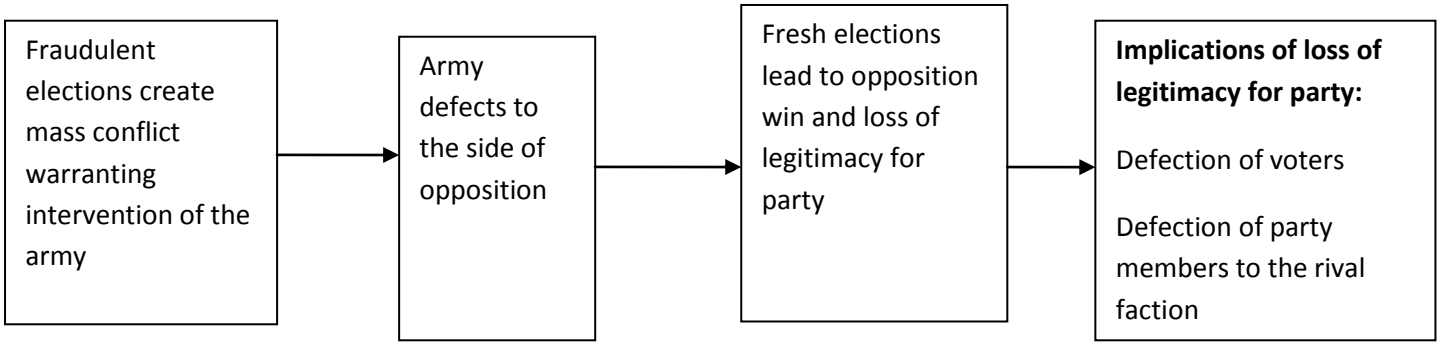
Thus due to this imperative of maintaining party cohesiveness, authoritarian parties with high power-sharing will be more sensitive to serious challenges by opposition which can affect the unity of the party. Mass conflict led by the opposition to contest fraudulent elections is one such challenge which can potentially affect the cohesiveness of the authoritarian party/coalition. In the scenario of mass conflict which leads to the defection of the armed forces and an electoral recount or fresh elections which brings the opposition in power, the party stands to potentially incur very heavy losses. It will lose its **legitimacy**, potentially resulting in mass desertions by voters and party members of the rival faction. This can cause the party to even disintegrate, threatening the demise of political careers of party members. Thus these autocracies are likely to refrain from electoral fraud and often peacefully accept defeat when faced with a strong opposition. In autocracies where

[37] See Brownlee 2007, Ch. 1 and 4. Brownlee explains how durability of authoritarian regimes is casually linked to management of elite cohesion with the UMNO in Malaysia and the National Democratic Party in Egypt. Also see Friedman and Wong 2008, Part I and II for excellent essays on survival of dominant parties after losing incumbency in autocratic and democratic regimes.

different political factions within the party exert control over decision-making, a strengthening opposition alters the cost-benefit structure of manipulating elections.

Figure 3 below shows the casual chain that such competitive autocrats fear might potentially unfold if they ignore the threat of mass conflict and rig elections.

Fig. 3



Therefore, leaders of parties where party elites have a relatively equitable stake in decision-making will actually be more willing to lose elections rather than undertake the risky act of ballot-rigging when there is a high chance that the opposition will lead a popular revolt. Even if the party loses dominant control over the state by losing elections, it can still maintain its cohesiveness and a) have some access to rent and control over policy-making and b) subsequently also hope to contest and even win future elections.

A simple decision-making tree can show how diffusion of power in autocratic parties rationally influences payoffs for committing electoral fraud vis-à-vis those for losing clean elections. **Figure 4a** provides a decision-making tree to show the various possibilities resulting in the aftermath of electoral fraud and their payoffs for such autocratic parties.

The tree attempts to primarily explain why autocratic parties with diffused power-sharing will choose to lose clean elections, rather than attempt to win through ballot rigging when the threat of an opposition-led revolt is high. The values assigned to different outcomes are arbitrary but they effectively help to elucidate the concept of higher and lower payoffs for different autocrats.

For the sake of simplicity there are two assumptions on which alternative decisions are based: a) there are only two actors – the autocratic party and the opposition and b) that the autocrat will lose if it does not rig elections.

The autocrat can decide to commit fraud **(F)** or not do it **(NF)**. The dominant party will get the highest payoff (10) if it wins rigged elections without facing a mass challenge by the opposition – outcome **(a)**. This payoff is based on the hegemonic control that the party is able to retain over state power and resources. Losing elections has a payoff of 3 for the autocratic party, because it will still continue to have some control over resources and policy-making through some legislative representation won during the elections. Thus Outcome **(d)**, which is the scenario of the autocrat losing elections without ballot rigging, reflects this payoff.

Outcome **(b)** occurs when the autocrat commits electoral fraud and then faces mass conflict but the army represses the latter enabling the party to maintain its dominance. In this case, the cost of repression is -2 and thus resulting payoff for the party is 8.

Yet in the case of outcome **(c)** mass conflict in the aftermath of electoral fraud causes the defection of the armed forces. This alludes to the high possibility of an electoral recount or fresh elections ultimately leading to an opposition win. In this case, the autocrat not only

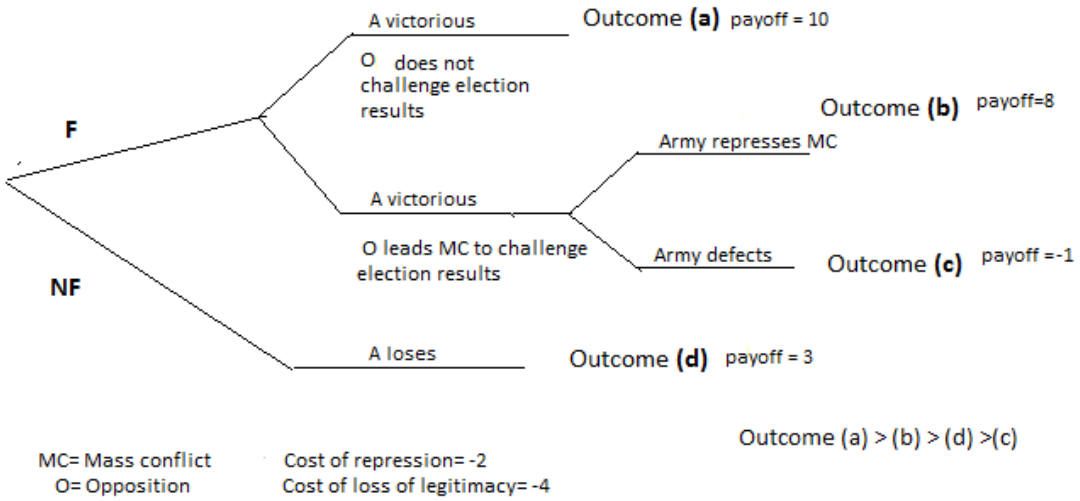
loses its dominance over state power and resources, it also stands to lose its legitimacy which can result in mass desertions of party members (esp. of the rival factions) and defection of future voters. Loss of legitimacy has a cost of -4. Since the payoff for outcome **(c)** is relative to outcome **(d)** - the payoff the party would have attained by losing unrigged elections- the consequent payoff for **(c)** is (3-4 = -1).

Outcome **(c)** is thus the worst possible scenario for this party. On the contrary, in outcome **(d)** where the autocratic party refrains from cheating in elections and loses peacefully, it can still hope to have access to some state resources and power due to legislative seats won in the elections.

Although the autocrat cannot fully determine *ex ante* the army's decision to side up with the opposition or repress it in the event of a mass challenge. Yet the constraint of collective decision-making makes the autocrat act more cautiously when the threat of mass challenge is present. Therefore when there is a threat of a massive civil disobedience:

Payoff for accepting electoral defeat < potential payoff for electoral fraud

Fig. 4a



In fact the imperative of legitimacy will constrain these competitive autocrats with diffused power-sharing from taking the risk of bringing opposition and voters out on the streets. An increasingly competitive political system drives these parties to undertake institutional reform for making elections fairer – for example, by creating independent election commission and minimizing chances of electoral cheating for instance. They do this to credibly commit the strong opposition to the electoral process under a neutral administrative system, rather than provoking it to delegitimize elections and the dominance of the autocratic incumbent by boycotting elections or challenging election results.

These autocrats might undertake electoral reform to commit opposition to a fairer electoral contest with the assurance that they will inevitably emerge victorious in elections because of their dominance over resources, media etc. However, when the opposition gets strong

enough and the autocrat faces new challenges over time (such as structural crises like economic predicaments or wars), they will still not reverse electoral reform or use unconstitutional/repressive means to block an opposition victory. This is the reason why such competitive autocrats experience the phenomenon of "incremental democratization" rather than a total regime transformation. A growing opposition can progressively extract concessions to make elections more free and fair from a regime which despite being autocratic essentially seeks legitimacy and thus break its dominance.

When the autocratic party peacefully accepts defeat instead of instigating violence to stay in power, it can still play the role of opposition and continue to have access to state resources and privileges through some seats in the legislature. Moreover, by preserving its cohesiveness the party can still hope to contest elections in the future and possibly even win. In this manner, strong autocratic parties are no different from democratic parties, which accept defeat yet hope to win again in the future. Kenneth F. Greene makes this point in his excellent comparison between dominant parties in autocratic and democratic regimes. According to him, the Dominant Party Democratic Regimes (DPDR) in Japan and Italy faced electoral defeat in the same way as the Dominant Party Autocratic Regimes (DPAR) in Mexico and in Taiwan – mainly through loss of electoral support. When these dominant parties lost their hegemonic control over resources such as patronage and access to media, voters defected to rising opposition parties.[38] For these autocratic parties, repression became too costly in the face of a rising opposition and these autocrats accepted electoral defeat in a similar way as their democratic counterpart did.

[38] Greene 2007, Chapter 8

Concentrated power in competitive autocracies: explaining the decision to cling to power through blatant fraud

On the contrary, concentration of political power in the autocratic party implies that the autocrat serves to retain and enhance personal power of the ruler rather than serve the collective interest of party elites. Geddes explains authoritarian coalitions become narrower as power becomes more centralized and personalized in these regimes. As rulers become more personalistic, they have a tendency to make the authoritarian distributive coalition narrow, by excluding threatening members and personally hoarding their resources instead.[39] This inclination to hoard resources and concentrate power reflects a common trait of most personalist rulers.

In the absence of institutionalized procedures of rank-and-file promotions to higher political office, the personalist dictator often employs divide-and-rule policies to keep the authoritarian coalition/party divided by favouring certain members (particularly those who lack charisma and political ambition) and not others. Thus the dictator's cohort of lackeys (which comprises the minimum winning coalition) actually *competes* with rival factions within the authoritarian party for dictator's favour. The dictator's lackeys often lack a support base in society and are mostly dependent on their patrimonial relationship with the dictator for access to rent and other perks.[40] Geddes explains how in spite of the narrow "winning coalition" of the personalist ruler, rival factions in personalist regimes will refrain

[39] Geddes, 2004
[40] Geddes 1999. See section on "The Interests of Members of Cliques"

from plotting to overthrow the leader because of the very high costs incurred if rebellion is unsuccessful.[41]

For the personalist ruler who has the propensity to concentrate power and his minimum winning coalition of loyalists, the worst possible scenario is the personalist ruler's removal from premiership. Unlike the case of autocrats with high power-sharing amongst coalition members whose political careers are tied with the survival of the party, the personalist leader and his support group are not concerned with party legitimacy and its cohesiveness. Their political survival is contingent on the personalist ruler's ability to retain the highest office rather than the institution of the party itself. The loss of personal power implies a permanent loss of political perks most of which are extra-constitutional) for the dictator and his clique. The consequent loss of legal immunity can also imply that the dictator and his cohort will be subjected to myriad legal battles and be impeached by political rivals for his former abuses in power.

This is the precise reason why ruling parties dominated by strongmen are less likely to be receptive to opposition pressure for clean elections. If the government rigs elections and the armed forces acquiesce to the demand of the challengers for fresh elections, there is a high chance that the personalist ruler will lose office. This is the worst-case scenario for the personalist ruler and his supporters.

Yet losing office this way will result in the same worst possible scenario as losing office through clean elections. In both cases, the personalist leader attains the disastrous outcomes related with his removal from office. While the defection of the armed forces

[41] Geddes 2004, 11

cannot be accurately predicted *ex ante*, the personalist dictator will know for sure that his party is losing at the polls due to the government's control of the election commission. Therefore, he will be more inclined to take the risk of rigging ballots to cling to power.

Figure 4b provides a tree to show the various possibilities resulting in the aftermath of electoral fraud and their payoffs for autocrats with low institutionalization/high personalism. The autocrat can decide to engage in fraud **(F)** or not **(NF)**. Again like the tree in **Figure 4a,** this tree also assumes that (i) there are only two main players – the autocrat and the opposition and (ii) the autocrat will lose elections if it does not rig them.

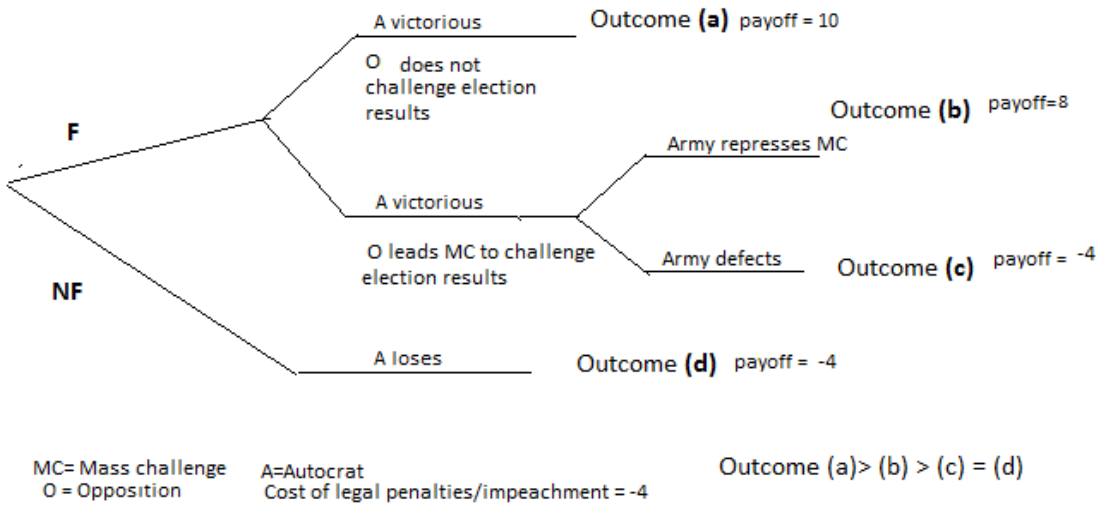
Outcome **(a)** represents the payoff of winning rigged elections without any opposition challenge, which is 10. For the personalist dictator and his cohort, losing elections is the worst scenario because the ruler loses power of the highest office. Thus the payoff for completely losing political power will be 0 but loss of personal power can lead to other costs for the autocrat – like the possibility of myriad legal battles and end of political career. Thus assuming that these long-term costs have a payoff of -4, the personalist dictator will have a total payoff of -4 in this scenario.

Thus payoff for outcome **(d)** where the autocrat loses clean elections is -4. If rigged elections by the personalist dictator result in mass conflict, two scenarios can result. In outcome **(b)** the army will repress the mass challenge. The cost of repression is -2, yet the autocrat will continue to hold his dominant position, which makes the payoff 8 in this case. However in outcome **(c)** the army will choose to defect and side with the opposition that challenges fraudulent elections. In this case fresh elections will lead to the opposition coming into power and loss of personal power of the authoritarian incumbent and the

possible termination of his political career which yields a value of 0. Yet possible subjection to legal penalties and political retribution by succeeding incumbents adds further costs of -4. This possibility will again result in the worst payoff for the personalist leader and his support coalition which is -4. Thus losing clean elections has the same payoff as the possibility of losing through the defection of armed forces in the event of mass conflict. So when the threat of mass conflict is high:

Payoff for accepting electoral defeat = potential payoff of electoral fraud

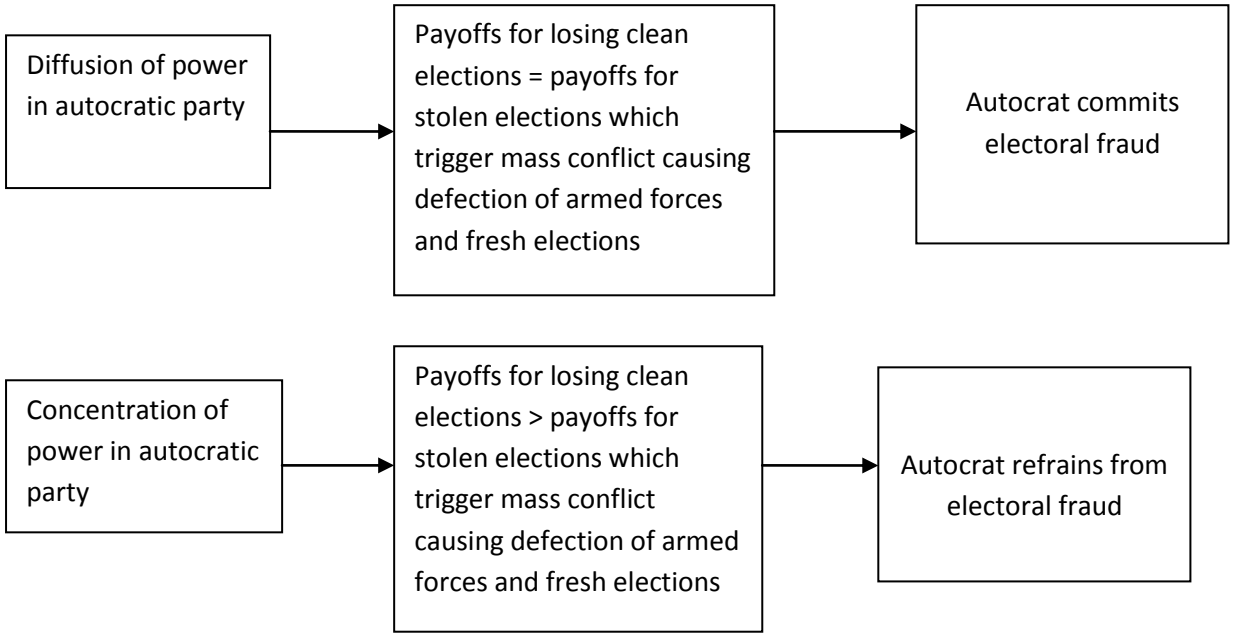
Fig. 4b



This is the reason why ruling parties which are led by strongmen are less likely to initiate electoral reforms to make elections more fair and free. Insecurity about the consequences of removal from office causes them to retain tight control of electoral system.

Figure 5 provides diagrammatically summarizes the above discussion of my theoretical mechanism:

Fig. 5


Diffusion of power in autocratic party
Payoffs for losing clean elections = payoffs for stolen elections which trigger mass conflict causing defection of armed forces and fresh elections
Autocrat commits electoral fraud
Concentration of power in autocratic party
Payoffs for losing clean elections > payoffs for stolen elections which trigger mass conflict causing defection of armed forces and fresh elections
Autocrat refrains from electoral fraud

Case-studies

Now a discussion of my case-studies will show how payoffs for electoral fraud for different regimes varied according to differences in power-sharing within the ruling autocratic party. First I will discuss the case of Serbia where concentration of power within the ruling party allowed the leader Slobodan Milosevic to take the risk of rigging elections in spite of a formidable opposition coalition. Then I will discuss the case of Mexico where diffusion of power-sharing amongst the party elite facilitated a more cautious approach in the electoral arena.

The rise of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia

Serbia was part of the communist confederation of Yugoslavia, along with six other republics of Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia and Kosovo. The country was based on power-sharing by representatives of these ethnic republics at the federal level in the League of Communists. Jozip Broz Tito, a communist strongman was the first President of Yugoslavia of the "Second Yugoslavia" which lasted from after World War 2 to 1991. Tito was an avid promoter and member of the Non-Aligned movement during the Cold War.

In 1986, six years after Tito's death, Milosevic rose as a rising leader in the Yugoslav system when Ivan Stambolic, a Titoist veteran of the Serbian League of Communists, appointed him as the President of the Central Committee of the Serbian League of Communists. Milosevic was driven by the need to create a more unitary Yugoslav system, as opposed to a looser federation advocated by Croatia's leader Milan Kucan. These conflicting approaches to

restructuring a debilitated confederacy were to be the instigator of ethnic wars that would subsequently break up Yugoslavia. [42]

Concentration of power in the Socialist Party of Serbia: Milosevic's personalist control over the party

As Yugoslavia edged closer to the brink of disintegration, Milosevic saw nationalism as an important opportunity to consolidate his own authority in a communist system in Serbia which had lost its legitimacy after the breakup of the Soviet Union and seize as much territory as possible for "Greater Serbia".[43] Using extra-constitutional methods he started facilitating mass protests by radical nationalist groups in Serb minority republics like Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina and autonomous provinces like Vojvodina. These mass demonstrations were termed as the "happening of the people".[44] Milosevic was essentially using Serbs in other republics and provinces as tools for "advancing his own power within and outside Serbia". [45]

However, in Serbia Milosevic's nationalist message was allowing him to get overly powerful in the public domain and also within his party.[46] He was using raw "street power" of the Serbian majority to circumvent party hierarchy in his own League of Communist in Serbia. Cohen describes is as the essence of Milosevic's anti-bureaucratic revolution in Serbia initiated in 1990.[47] Gradually Milosevic was leading the faction of radical nationalists within the Serbian League of Communists, who were vociferously challenging the Serbian leaders

[42] Lampe 1996, Ch. 10
[43] Cohen 2001, 73
[44] Thomas 1999, Ch. 5
[45] Cohen 75.
[46] Sibler, 1 July 1991
[47] Cohen, 75

of the old Titoist order – like Stambolic and Pavlovic- who believed in multi-ethnic solidarity and brotherhood with other republics. At the Eight Session of the League of Communist of Serbia, Milosevic asserted himself in Serbian politics by getting his rivals from the party; Pavlovic was removed from his position on the Serbian Party Presidium and Stambolic was replaced as President of Serbia's collective state presidency.[48] In tandem with these developments, Milosevic struck an alliance with nationalist Serbian intellectuals and brought mass media under his control to use as a tool for the purpose to spreading propaganda.[49]

Due to the withering appeal of communism brought by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the League of Communist refashioned itself as the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) after the introduction of multi-party elections at the republic and federal level in 1990. On 16-17 July 1989, a Unification Congress at Belgrade saw the fusion of the League of Communists of Serbia with the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Serbia (SAWP) to form the SPS. The merger allowed the former communists to gain $160,000,000 in material and financial assets.[50] This new organization which had a fundamental continuity with the former League of Communists[51] and its centralized, hierarchical style of decision-making, also inherited its predecessor's control over the media, police, military and economy.[52] Thus SPS, advantaged by its superior assets, membership and grass-roots support, came to be the hegemonic party under the chairmanship of Milosevic.

[48] See Mertus 1999, 155 on how Milosevic used a tough nationalist stance (especially on bringing the autonomous province of Kosovo under centralized control) to purge his rivals within the SPS.
[49] Ibid. 74-88, Dragonic 2002 Ch. 5;
[50] Thomas, 63
[51] See Gertraud Lessing and John Borrell, "Yugoslavia The Old Demons Arise," 6 August 1990 available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,970851-1,00.html>
[52] Cohen, 120

Milosevic made an attempt to recruit younger cadres in the SPS and also give important positions at the republic and federal level to notable Serbs.[53] However, this was just an attempt to portray a widening of the power-sharing coalition but Milosevic never seriously contemplated giving up real power. Dobrica Cosic, a Serbian writer and proponent of a united Yugoslavia, was invited by Milosevic to become the President of the Third Yugoslavia in 1992 – which only comprised Serbia and Montenegro. And Milan Panic, an American businessman of Serbian roots, was also invited to take the position of the federal Prime Minister.[54] Yet subsequently their tendency to disagree with Milosevic regarding the ethnic wars that Milosevic fuelled in Bosnia and Kosovo subjected them to expulsion from Serbian politics.[55]

Even though Milosevic initiated the SPS in Serbia's epoch of controlled multi-party elections democratic politics with a new air of openness by giving former Marxist dissidents and intellectuals important positions in the party.[56]However, Milosevic had used his nationalist appeal amongst the populace as a warrant to completely centralize decision-making power. Thus a strong party like SPS, whose membership reached about 500,000 in 1996 and which represented many important personalities in Serbian politics, had become hijacked by the charismatic leadership of Milosevic. [57]

[53] Thomas, 122
[54] Ibid. 122; "A new Prime Minister with new ideas," *The Economist*, 18 July 1992
[55] See "Milan Panic - political novice who dared defy Milosevic," *Reuters News*, 1 December 1992; Chuck Sudetic, "Panic Ousted as Yugoslav Prime Minister," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 December 1992; Kovacic 1993

[56] Thomas 63
[57] Cohen 120

Lack of constitutional checks and balances against the Presidency

Before the elections Milosevic drafted the new constitution of the republic, despite demands of the opposition to let elected officials do it after the first multi-party elections. Interestingly enough, the constitution laid down rules for an immensely strong presidency, which not only sought to marginalize opposition parties in politics but also minimize incentive for dissent within the hegemonic party. For instance, the President had sweeping powers to take measures without the consent of the parliament and could not be challenged in the constitutional court. The directly elected President of Serbia was not accountable to any constitutional body and provisions for his recall through a referendum required far more votes than were necessary for his election. [58] Thus the constitution for Serbia set stage for personalist rule.

The protracted presidency

Milosevic was constantly devising new ways of prolonging his tenure as the top leader. After serving two terms as the President of Serbia, he stood for the President of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 1997 elections – a position he had to take over since he was hesitant to violate the constitution of Serbia and become President of Serbia for the third time. In 2000, he called early elections at the presidential, federal and republican level. But before this, he and his governing coalition changed the constitution to allow for direct elections for

[58] Cohen 116; The provisions for presidential recall and president's power to dissolve the assembly can be found in Article 88 and 89 of the republican constitution of Serbia (1990) available at: http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/untc/unpan019071.pdf

the President of the FRY, and indirect elections for the President at the republic level. This was done to preserve Milosevic's position in power.[59]

Colluding with Milosevic to preserve his dominant political position was a class of cronies he had created whose patrimony and state power was linked to the Serbian president's position. The ruling elite of the SPS and also indirectly of the Yugoslav Left political party (JUL) headed by Milosevic's wife, Mirjana Milosevic were controlled by Milosevic. The regime loyalists comprised a motley group of partisans of the old regime, the non-communist nationalists, modernizers, technocratic reformists and smugglers.[60] Within the ruling coalition, Milosevic exercised maximum control over decision-making and disregarded opinions of even his small team of advisors. [61]

The opposition in Serbia before 2000 elections

Milosevic won two elections as the President of Serbia in 1990 and 1992 led his party to win five legislative elections at the republic and federal level (in 1990, two in 1992, 1993 and 1996). However, with each year the margin of victory for the SPS declined. Over time the system in Serbia became more competitive rather than just being completely dominated by a hegemonic party. [62]The main opposition parties to the centre and centre-left were the Democratic Party (DS) and Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) which opposed the ethnic wars in the 1990s and wanted to see Serbia as a liberal democracy. While on the right, there was

[59] See Gabriel Partos, "Milosevic: No signs of bowing out," *BCC News*, 6 July, 2000 and Christopher Lockwood, Milosevic lust for power may spell end of Yugoslavia, *The Telegraph*, 7 July 2000
[60] Wood 31 December 1996
[61] Cohen 115-117
[62] See Jovan Kavocic, "Serbian opposition scores victories over Milosevic," *Reuters*, 14 January 1997 .

the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) and the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) comprising nationalist and ultra-nationalist groups.[63]

Ideological, political and personal divisions amongst the opposition groups had always dampened their effort to oust Milosevic.[64] Additionally, Milosevic's nationalist strategy for political survival as the top leader in Serbia and rump state of Yugoslavia proved fruitful in the 1990s. The public, along with the opposition, remained aloof from the goal of genuine democratization due to the wars Milosevic had fuelled in neighbouring Croatia, Bosnia and later Kosovo by funding and arming radical Serb groups. [65]

The "Bulldozer" Revolution in the making

However, there were clear signs that Milosevic's regime was suffering from lack of legitimacy as the millennium approached.[66] After Milosevic had acquiesced to NATO's terms for ending the war in Kosovo in 1999, he was confronted with the threat of opposition forces focussing on the need for genuine democracy in Yugoslavia and Serbia.

It was becoming obvious to Milosevic that the forthcoming elections would not be an easy win for him. A nascent student movement by the name of *Otpor* had started campaigning against Milosevic before the elections in 2000. By July 2000, *Otpor* had nearly 30-40,000 activists, 120 local branches and seven regional centers.[67] The opposition parties, under pressure from *Otpor*, were gradually beginning to realize the importance of achieving genuine unity to oust Milosevic. They unified as the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, to

[63] See Cohen 122-123
[64] Cohen 124; Thomas 107-118; Stojanovic, 19 April 1997
[65] Cohen 285
[66] See Guzelova 2000 for details on the rising unpopularity of the Milosevic regime.
[67] Bieber 2003, 84-87

contest forthcoming elections. They strongly demanded free and fair elections. This demand was put forth in a large protest gathering in Belgrade on 14 April, which was attended by some 200,000 citizens.[68] Due to the ethnic genocide that Milosevic's policies provoked in Yugoslavia, Western countries were keen to see the ouster of the Eastern European dictator. The EU, keen on seeing Serbia democratize had given financial assistance to bolster democratic parties and civic groups.[69]

Milosevic's refusal to step down: payoffs for electoral vis-à-vis payoffs for accepting electoral defeat

The opposition candidate Vojislav Koštunica supported collectively by the DOS and the rising *Otpor* movement soundly beat Milosevic in the 2000 presidential elections - 48.96 percent to 38.62 percent. This was in spite of many irregularities committed by the government-controlled Federal Election Commission (SIK) – like blatant rigging of ballots and intimidation of voters in some instances. One of these glaring irregularities was the announcement by SIK that Kostunica had won 49.9 per cent of the total votes (and not a 51 percent majority required for a decisive win) and thus a run-off election was required.[70]

This was rejected by the opposition parties which starting inciting mobilizing the masses for a massive civil disobedience. On October 5, the Federal Constitutional Court annulled election results of the first round. This proved to be the last nail in the coffin for Milosevic's political career. An overwhelming 700,000 people came out on the streets to protest this

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[68] Goati 53.

[69] See Carothers, 2001; Also see Richard Youngs, "Democracy promotion: the case of European Union Strategy," *Centre for European Policy Studies*, 2001, 24-25 available at: http://www.ceps.eu/book/democracy-promotion-case-european-union-strategy

[70] Goati 64; See Birch 2002, 499-511 for a detailed description of the unfolding of the electoral revolution which led to Milosevic's ouster.

move.[71] Finally the regime relented to accept the results of September 24 elections after the military and riot police refused to break fire on the protestors. This move of the security forces to not undertake hard-line tactics reflected cracks in the regime. [72]

Why did the political opposition and civic groups' demand to hold clean elections not prevent Milosevic's regime from rigging elections? The reason was that Milosevic was supremely powerful in the regime – he used the SPS as a base of cronies to maintain his political supremacy in Serbia and Yugoslavia. For an autocratic party in which political power is concentrated in the office of paramount leader, the worst possible outcome is the leader losing this office.

Due to his control of the SIK, Milosevic had realized that fair elections would result in his electoral loss which could have grave consequences for him and his cronies. Firstly, this implied the loss of perks and prerogatives of premiership for Milosevic but also loss of patronage and political positions of his cronies, many of whom had built their political careers through personal affiliations with the charismatic President.[73] Secondly, as a typical dictator who had become increasingly personalist over time, Milosevic had seriously abused power. The nationalist wars that Milosevic had started to marginalize opponents of his authoritarian policies had disastrous consequences: ethnic genocide, breakup of Yugoslavia and imposition of UN sanctions on Serbia. These UN sanctions thoroughly impoverished the country and the consequent breakdown of routine economic activity instigated the criminalization of Serb society. Mafia gangs controlling illegal business activity - often under

[71] See "*Timeline: After Milosevic,"* BBC News, 6 June 2006
[72] Thompson and Kuntz 2004, 168-169
[73] My point is corroborated by the serious losses that Milosevic's loyalists faced after his ouster caused by the Bulldozer Revolution. See Simon Mann, "Serbs shed Milosevic cronies," *The Age*, 11 October 2000 and Robert Fisk, "Yugoslav embassies purges of Milosevic cronies," *The Independent*, 16 December 2000 ; Alex Todorovic, "Serbia dismantles system behind Milosevic's rule," *The Telegraph*, 15 February 2001

government's auspices - and breakdown of the judicial system became a routine feature of Serbia.[74] And while most Serbs were languishing in poverty, the elite of Milosevic's regime had amassed vast riches, which one critic had labelled as the "great robbery of the people".[75]

Due to this rampant abuse of authority, Milosevic had strong reasons to believe that he would have to face legal battles without the impunity afforded by his political office. Moreover during his tenure as the leader, Milosevic had purged many other leaders who disagreed with his political manoeuvres. Many from this purged lot had joined the ranks of the opposition. For example Cosic, the former Yugoslav President, whom Milosevic had purged, had joined the strongly anti-Milosevic *Otpor*. For Milosevic accepting electoral loss opened the possibility of the return of these purged elites to power in a new government who could seek punitive action against him.[76]

Yet the high mobilization of the opposition also posed a decision-making dilemma for Milosevic. There were clear signs that continued popular pressure for the regime to relent would ultimately cause Milosevic to step down. When Kostunica won the first round of elections, countless came out on the streets to celebrate his victory. Aggressively chanting "Kill Yourself Slobodan and Save Serbia," over 40,000 people marched through Belgrade celebrating Kostunica's victory in the first round of elections. Thousands also gathered in Serbia's two other major cities, Novi Sad and Nis, to celebrate Kostunica's triumph even before the official results were announced. Kostunica had warned that any attempts by

[74] See "Serbian gangs richer than the government," *BBC News*, 20 June 2001
[75] Cohen 161; See Katarina Kratovac, "Bank Governor says billions siphoned away by Milosevic's regime," *Associated Press Newswires*, 8 December 2000
[76] Partos, 15 May 2007

Milosevic to tamper with the vote will result in the opposition protesting for their "for as long as it takes." [77] Thus the risk of mass demonstrations following any attempt to unfairly manipulate election results was very high.

However, the threat that popular pressure would ultimately force him to give up power had the same payoff as legitimately accepting electoral defeat. This is because relenting power as a consequence of popular pressure also implied the same loss of political power and legal impunity.

Milosevic could not have fully known what the army's reaction would be if mass protests broke out *ex ante*. He knew he had the support of the army chief of staff Nebojša Pavkovic, who had openly sided with Milosevic before elections.[78] Just after election campaigning resulted in a huge turnout for Kostunica, the army chief indicated his support for the Milosevic regime by warning that any sort of disturbances by the opposition during elections will be curbed.[79] This is why Milosevic took the risk to hang on to power through electoral fraud and then the annulment of the election results. He tried his luck in clinging to power, because the possible defection of the army in the event of a mass conflict was a loss just as great as accepting electoral defeat.

Finally the regime relented by accepting the results of the first round of elections. Had power not been so centralized in the autocracy, other stake-holders in the regime would have taken a more precautionary stance in the electoral arena. As a consequence of Milosevic's ambition to maintain personal power in spite of popular protests, SPS and its

[77] Stojanovic 2000. Also see Richard Beeston, "Rigged ballot casts shadow over poll," *The Times,* 25 September 2000
[78] See Thompson and Kuntz 2004, 168
[79] See David Millward and Julius Strauss, "Election fears as army moves to back Milosevic", *The Telegraph*, 22 September 2000

allied parties (JUL and SRS) lost a great deal of legitimacy and political support. After coming to power the new ruling elite of the DOS forced the *ancien regime* to accept the political compromise to hold elections at the republican level in December. These parties found themselves in much a weakened position and had to compromise with the DOS. In December, the loss of legitimacy translated into a major defeat for the members of the old regime. SPS and SRS together gained only 24 percent of the mandates, while JUL gained not one single seat, and DOS won 70.4 percent of the seats.[80]

Mexico – The origins of the PRI and the pact of elite power-sharing

The Institutional Republic Party (PRI) in Mexico can trace its origins to the Mexican revolution (1910 – 1920), which was a protracted popular struggle against the long-ruling dictator, Porfirio Diaz. By the end of the revolution, victorious warlords established a political organization to rule the country in the aftermath of chaos. The party was intended to bring revolutionary leaders, local bosses and extant political parties under the umbrella of one political party and negotiate a pact of power-sharing.[81]

Power-sharing amongst elites in the PRI made the party prone to splits. For instance, PRI had been historically vulnerable to factionalization over selection of the presidential nominee. In 1988, a major split resulted in the creation of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) when the Cardenas, the presidential candidate supported by the leftist faction within PRI was not nominated for the presidency.[82] Ironically this susceptibility to splitting also made elite cooperation absolutely imperative. In parties with a diffused power-

[80] Goati 57; See "Serbia: from Milosevic's ouster to another presidential polls*", Agence France-Presses*, 8 December 2002
[81] Magaloni 2006, 4
[82] Ibid. 17; See Castaneda 2000, p. 63-89 for an in depth discussion on presidential succession in 1988 elections

structure, interdependent constituent factions find it imperative to maintain unified party umbrella. Particularly in hegemonic parties like the PRI in Mexico, Koumitang (KMT) in Taiwan and Grand National Party (GNP), which did not have an ideology providing an adhesive of legitimacy, elite splitting was always a major threat to the hegemonic survival of the party and eventually contributed to the demise in the hegemonic status of these parties.[83]

Magaloni describes three ways in which PRI thwarted party splits. Firstly, lavish electoral campaigns and regular victories at the polls gave an image of invincibility to the dominant party. Secondly, distribution of spoils and patronage to party members maintained their incentive to stay with the party. Thirdly, electoral rules were intended to raise the costs of entry for potential opposition parties in the electoral arena. [84]

Magaloni argues that it was not repression or electoral fraud that made the PRI dominant in Mexico. It was rather its ability to distribute patronage to its electoral constituents and making people economically dependent on the party-state which made the people *willingly* vote for the party. Throughout the period of the important substitution (ISI) during the 1960 and 1970s, the peasantry and workers which comprised the large base of depended on the party-dominated state for land and wages respectively.[85]

Kenneth F. Greene makes a similar point. He argues that PRI's resources dominance – its control over economy and media particularly – discouraged the formation of opposition groups which could not compete with this powerful party to win the loyalty of the median

[83] See Solinger 2001, 30-42 For a discussion on the similar political atrophy of single party dominance in South Korea, Taiwan and Mexico.
[84] Magaloni 2006, Ch. 1
[85] Ibid. 71

voter. This is why the opposition parties which existed operated at ideological extremes and had a limited base of radical voters who wanted their leaders to pursue policy-oriented goals rather than provide them with patronage via access to political office. [86]

The constrained presidency and supremacy of party interests

The President who was an elected member of the party could not seek re-election for another term in office. This regular turnover of personnel in the highest office was intended specifically intended to thwart the emergency of personalist rule. The preceding thirty-year dictatorship of Diaz had left a deep scar in the memory of the warlords who overthrew him during the Mexican Revolution. Thus they wanted to thwart creating an organization which could be hijacked my personalist ambition. Magaloni explains how this system of rank-and-file succession to the highest office gave rivals within the coalition an incentive to wait for their turn rather than scheme assassinations against the incumbent president and one another.[87]

The Mexican presidency also remained "captured" by party interests, even though that was not very salient in the constitutional checks and balances. Yet as Boix and Svolik argue, Mexican presidents had leeway to appoint cabinets and nominate successors, this was done is accordance with the "interests of the party bureaucracy, its allies in the society (such as the labor movement), and the governing class in the legislature and across state

[86] Greene, 2007
[87] Magaloni 2008, 12

governments."[88] Therefore presidents could not build their own support base that could upset the institutional setup that had been put in place since the 1930s.[89]

Casar makes a similar point in his chapter on executive-legislative relationships in PRI-led Mexico. He argues that while the presidents had power well beyond constitutional stipulations, these informal powers had institutional roots deriving from the party and electoral systems and not from the abuse of personal power.[90]

Economic change in Mexico and rise of the opposition

However, in the 1980s things changed for the PRI. The PRI like many other hegemonic parties which lose their ideological/revolutionary legitimacy over decades, like the Communist Party in China (CCP) or the KMT in Taiwan have to employ "temporary projects" to delay democratization and stay in power. Economic development is probably the most important project for permanently delaying democratization.[91] However, the debt crisis as a result of the ISI during the 1980s triggered neoliberal reforms to resurrect the economy. De la Madrid's administration (1982-1988) initiated these reforms which would in the long-term reduce the state's corporatist control over the economy and hence adversely affect PRI's hegemony. This also marked the rise of Western-educated technocratic elite in the PRI who were eager to implement economic reforms in the PRI.[92]

This generational change in the PRI during the 1980s exacerbated the tensions between the "old guard" in the party which was more oriented towards populist policies and the new

[88] Boix and Svolik 2010, 26.
[89] Ibid. 26
[90] Casar 2002, 114
[91] Cheng, 2008, 129
[92] Demmers 2001, 150-181

technocratic elite. In 1987, the candidate of the faction comprising these technocratic elite, Carlos Salinas was chosen as the presidential candidate for the presidential polls in 1988. Thus when Chuauctemos Cardenas the leader of the "old guard" comprising left-leaning politicians which were against rapid neo-liberal restructuring, was not nominated as the presidential candidate, this faction broke from PRI . The result was the creation of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) which contested separately as the 1988.[93]

At the same time the National Action Party (PAN) had been making inroads in the Northern part of the country – an economically vibrant area which was becoming increasingly tied to the U.S. economy via North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA). The people in the northern localities were no longer economically dependent on the state and had defected to the side of the PAN, which had supported neoliberal policies.[94]

PRI's decision to rig 1988 presidential elections

The PRI found itself in a rather vulnerable position in the presidential elections of 1988. The PAN and the PRD, in spite of ideological divisions amongst them, had decided to jointly support PRD leader Cardenas as the candidate for the President.

The 1988 elections were most definitely rigged elections, even though it is not known whether PRI padded its victory or manufactured a wider margin of victory. It took this risk because it was able to co-opt the PAN by offering it side-payments to accept fraudulent results. PAN, a typical moderate opposition party with a weak support base, was willing to collude with the government in exchange for top ministerial positions. It's relatively weaker strength as a strong alternative to the ruling party and ideological/policy deviation from that

[93] Ibid 164-167
[94] Magaloni 2006, 95-96 and 2005, 141-142

of the populist PRD pushed it to act opportunistically and increase its own political gains by essentially legitimizing the autocratic order.[95] The PRD with its radical voter base contested these election results citing allegations of fraud and consequently lost many of its political workers to post-electoral violence.[96] However the opportunistic PAN wanted to maximize its political gains in the autocratic system.

PRI's decision to defraud 1994 presidential elections – payoffs for clean election as opposed to payoffs for rigging elections

Even though the PRI used electoral fraud to win elections in 1988, it refrained from electoral fraud in the legislative elections of 1994. PRI's decision was triggered by the audacious opposition that the party faced in 1994. The Zapatista rebellion in the Mexico's southern agricultural state of Chiapas came almost as a surprise to the PRI, which had just signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was intended to intensify Mexico's trade ties with U.S. and Canada. It was led by the Zapatista National Liberation Front (EZLN) –mainly peasants of indigenous Mayan origin- who protested the neoliberal shift in PRI's economic policies which had economically disadvantaged the poor peasantry of the Chiapas. With their faces hidden behind ski masks, around 3000 Zapatista guerrillas declared war against the state in Mexico. On 1 January when the NAFTA was supposed to come into effect, these guerrillas seized towns and cities in Chiapas, freed prisoners from a jail at a large state municipality and set fire to several police buildings and military barracks in the

[95] The Senegalese case offers a similar example. Abdoulaye Wade's Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) – the leading opposition party - throughout the 1990s rioted against the dubious election results which always resulted in a victory for the incumbent Socialist Party (PS). However eventually PDS would always acquiesce to co-optation by the incumbent party and Wade would end up as a minister in the parliament.
[96] Magaloni 2006, 242

area. Although the EZLN enjoyed brief success, their actions instigated a faceoff with the army ultimately leadings to a cease-fire agreement on 12 January 1994.

Amongst other demands for social and economic redistribution to the indigenous population, the EZLN cogently put forth a demand for free and fair elections. And even though they were a rag-tag army of rebels with little institutional basis for representing the masses, their persuasive agenda for political change had the effect of emboldening the opposition in Mexico. On January 27, Mexico's three leading political parties and five small parties signed a pact to push for reforms to streamline elections. The pact called for lowering the cap on campaign spending to create a more level playing field for the dominant PRI and the opposition and independent investigations to curb the incidence of electoral fraud.[97] There were also signs that the PRD, with its radical leftist stance, would opportunistically ally with the Zapatista rebels to protest if the PRI threatened to rig elections. [98]

Additionally, as the presidential election approached the Zapatistas hardened their rhetoric. In June, the leader of the group, Subcommandate Marcos threatened there will be a civil war if there was no "democratic opening" in the forthcoming elections.[99] Over time Zapatistas were able to attract a following of those opposed to autocratic rule. Weeks before the elections, over 4000 academics, peasants, observers and journalists travelled to jungles of the Chiapas to attend the "National Democratic Convention" organized by the

[97] Nusses, 6 February 1994.
[98] See "Presidential Candidate Likely to Meet with Zapatista Rebels in Chiapas", *The Associated Press Political Service*, 11 May 1994 . From 1994-1996 there were inclinations that the PRD might ally with the Zapatista rebels but a political alliance did not emerge between the two; See "Mexican leftist party says no Zapatista alliance," Reuters, 3 July 1996 .
[99] See Damien Fraser, "Mexico rebel chief warns of civil war," *Financial Times,* 22 June 1994 .

EZLN. The purpose of this event was to create a formidable civilian force capable of overturning the election results in case they were fraudulent.[100]

Therefore there was a genuine threat that rigged elections would spark a situation of a mass conflict that could possibly warrant the intervention of the army. At a time when Mexico was going through the crucial phase of trade integration with the U.S. and Canada, mass conflict following rigged elections could also disrupt foreign investment.[101] Since the PRI could count on strong popular support in the 1994 polls, President Salinas tried to neutralize the Zapatista rebellion by cooperating with the PAN to pass a major legislation which created an independent Federal Electoral Institute.[102] With the help of the PANistas in the Congress, he facilitated passage of electoral reforms which released the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) from the clutches of government control.

Magaloni argues the *credible threat of a mass conflict* made the PRI tie its hands *ex ante* by giving independence to the IFE. [103] However my comparative perspective on autocratic behaviour seeks to understand *why* the PRI responded to the threat of the mass conflict when clearly other autocracies did not. Magaloni argues that the ruling party will commit fraud as long as it produces a marginal payoff that will compensate the *legitimacy deficit*. Conversely if the legitimacy deficit appears to great *ex ante*, the ruling party will not engage in fraud. [104]

However, this line of reasoning applies to ruling parties like the PRI where power is diffused. As I have explained above, due to the representation of various factions and stake-holders within the PRI, the party had always been sensitive to the threat of splitting. Yet the

[100] See "In boost to rebels, thousands turn out at Zapatista convention," *AFPR*. 8 August 1994
[101] Aronson, 24 April 1994
[102] Franks 28 January 1994.
[103] Magaloni 2010, 762-763
[104] Ibid. 234-235

preservation of legitimacy and cohesiveness of the party was absolutely essential for individual factions to advance their political careers.[105] In 1994, an emboldened civil society and rising opposition encouraged by the bold tactics of the EZLN implied that electoral rigging could possibly lead to a large-scale civil disobedience.[106] The PRI did not want to risk a situation of a mass conflict which would lead to the intervention of the army and delegitimization of the electoral process.

Magaloni argues that the PRI *only* gave independence of the IFE in 1994 because it was sure it could win without electoral rigging.[107] However, even after the Peso crisis hit the country affecting the credibility of the PRI, the latter did not reverse its decision of limiting its institutional capacity to steal elections. In 1994, clean elections still brought the PRI candidate Ernesto Zedillo into power because the populace did not want to risk a change in leadership amidst economic uncertainty. Yet as the crisis prolonged and PRI lost control of its patronage machine, the party's support waned in its traditional electoral constituencies. The party did not become repressive vis-à-vis a rising opposition to prolong its incumbency. It in fact it responded to the opposition's demands by further electoral reforms – a major one being complete independence of the IFE - which aimed at creating a more level playing ground for the opposition.[108] In 1998, the PRI lost its legislative majority and in 2000 the party peacefully lost the Presidency to PAN's candidate Vincent Fox. As the opposition grew stronger – particularly the moderate opposition – the PRI found it increasingly less

[105] Ibid. 16-18
[106] See Gilberth and Otero 2001, 7-29 for a discussion on the rise of civil society and opposition after the Zapatista rebellion,
[107] Magaloni 244
[108] See Craig Torres and Diane Solis, "Electoral Reforms Target Mudslinging, Ballot-Stuffing as Mexican Vote Nears," *Wall Street Journal*, 3 July 1997

legitimate to rig elections to ensure its victory because of the credible threat of mass revolt.[109]

[109] Klesner, 1997

Conclusion

In this thesis I explore why opposition pressure to hold free and fair elections prevents some competitive autocrats from rigging elections but not others. I argue that diffusion of power or concentration of power (or high/low power-sharing amongst party elites) is the *independent variable* causing variation in response of competitive autocracies. Diffusion of power in the party/high degree of power-sharing amongst party elites will cause the party to refrain from rigging elections when there is a threat that the opposition will launch a mass conflict *ex post*. This decision is influenced by the need to maintain party legitimacy because a situation of a mass conflict can potentially cause the defection of the armed forces and fresh elections. In such a situation, the party stands to incur heavy losses of legitimacy, resulting in defection of its voters and party members potentially causing the party to disintegrate. Since individual careers of party elites are tied to the umbrella of the party, the ruling party serves the collective interest of maintaining party legitimacy and cohesiveness by choosing not to rig elections. Using a simple decision-making tree I explain that for parties with high power-sharing losing clean elections actually has a higher payoff than that for rigging elections, when the opposition can credibly challenge the dictator. This is because losing clean elections will ensure party legitimacy and cohesiveness thus enabling the party to have some access to political office as the opposition and continue contesting elections in the future.

Whereas concentration of power in the party/low power-sharing amongst party elites implies that there is no effective check on the personalist ambitions of top leadership within

the party. Thus even if there is a credible threat of an opposition-led challenge in the event of fradulent elections, the personalist dictator and his narrow clique of loyalists are likely to rig elections to maintain their position of supremacy. This is because for the dictator and his support group, losing clean elections has the same payoff as triggering mass conflict which can lead to the defection of the armed forces and fresh elections. The simple decision-making tree shows that both these strategic actions will result in the worst possible outcome of the loss of personal power for the dictator and his cohort and potential subjection to legal penalties and punishments for abuse of power.

My analysis of the case of the Socialist Party of Serbia shows how concentration of power in the Milosevic-led presidency meant that the leadership was not concerned with legitimacy of SPS. Instead the party became a vehicle for maintaining Milosevic's personal power. Before the 2000 elections the burgeoning opposition vociferously demanded free elections through mass demonstrations. Yet Milosevic chose to blatantly rig elections through his control over the Federal Election Commission (SIK). This move triggered mass demonstrations of the unified opposition parties and civil society, which finally led to the defection of the state's security apparatus. Thus fresh elections brought the opposition's candidate Vojislav Koštunica into power and delegitimized the Socialist Party of Serbia – a fact that was reflected in the party's dismal performance in legislative elections held subsequently in the same year.

While the case of the PRI in Mexico presents a different scenario. It shows how credible power-sharing amongst the elite in the PRI- quintessentially represented by regular turnover in the presidency – made the party sensitive to challenges by a burgeoning opposition. While the PRI had previously engaged in electoral fraud, the Zapatista rebellion in 1994 and

consequent emboldening of civil society and its rising demands for democratization posed a threat of a mass conflict over allegations of fraudulent elections. This kept the party away from electoral rigging in 1994 presidential elections. President Salinas pushed the legislative bill for creating an independent Federal Electoral Institute. In spite of the fact that the PRI won the 1994 elections, the Peso crisis in the same year progressively weakened the party's position and strengthened the major opposition party, the PAN. Yet despite its weakening political position, the PRI progressively carried out electoral reforms when it was pressured by a vociferous opposition to create an even playing field in the electoral arena. The imperative of maintaining a legitimate party, made it peacefully give up power to the opposition through clean elections rather than undertake any unconstitutional action to retain its dominant position. It lost its legislative majority in 1998 and finally the presidency in 2000.

Thus my theory has implications for understanding why autocratic parties are able to sustain even after they lose their hegemonic status. The analysis of my case-studies show that the imperative of maintaining party legitimacy - a consequence of elite power-sharing – when the party is faced with a strong opposition can potentially prolong its longevity. Political prudence comes when there are more actors involved in the decision-making process of the dominant political institution. And in fact low power-sharing can lead to the demise of parties in the face of popular pressures because risky behaviour can be expected when there is only one leader calling the shots.

Way in his work regarding the Colored Revolutions argues that dictators lacking a strong base of a party were the ones ousted during these electoral upheavals. He identifies the presence of a strong party which was more than just a machine for doling patronage – most

typically with "a highly salient ideology, a history of violent struggle, or a long track record of electoral success" – as a condition for autocratic stability.[110] Yet paradoxically party strength is very important for a peaceful transition when opposition becomes sturdy enough to pose a large-scale challenge against the regime. Thompson and Kuntz argue that "institutionalized interests" of strong communist parties in Nicaragua and Poland made them concede electoral defeat when faced with a strong opposition.[111] These institutionalized interests can actually be more specifically defined as institutionalized power-sharing within parties which made them sensitive to the rising challenge of the opposition and the altered geo-political circumstances after the demise of the Soviet Union. The prudent choice of party elites to maintain party legitimacy by stepping down from power bore fruit because they were able to maintain party durability and continue to partake in politics. In fact in 1995, just a few years after giving up power, the former communist party in Poland was able to make an impressive comeback in presidential and parliamentary elections.[112]

Many other states where single parties had dominated since the country's independence allowed peaceful transitions of power thus maintaining the capability to have legitimate access to state resources as major opposition parties and contest future elections. This kept these parties intact even after losing incumbency. African states have often been considered personalist or neo-patrimonial because of their underdeveloped political institutions and strong presidencies.[113] However, many dominant parties in single-party African were stable

[110] Way 2008, 55-69
[111] Thompson and Kuntz 2004, 122
[112] See Anthony Barker, "Poland's parliament elects Oleksy prime minister," *Reuters News*, 1 March 1995 and "Poles elect Kwasniewski, discharge Walesa-official," *Reuters News*, 20 November 1995
[113] See Bratton and De Valle 1994, 453-489

institutions for power-sharing, even though formal rules often did capture the extent of power distribution in these parties. For instance, consider the case of Senegal. Abdou Diouf – the second President of the country and the Socialist Party's (PS) second leader – was constitutionally a strong president. Yet the considerable democratic norms of elite politics in Senegal thwarted Diouf from purging, exiling, or imprisoning party rivals. [114] Diouf also showed a genuine commitment to democratization to keep the ruling party a legitimate institution and thus pressure from opposition parties made him initiate a major breakthrough reform to create an independent election commission (ONEL) before the 2000 elections.[115] Thus when a strong opposition coalition *Sopi* - Alternance 2000 – supporting presidential candidate Abdoulaye Wade came to challenge the incumbent Socialist Party, the latter chose to accept defeat peacefully rather than resort to electoral rigging. The PS continues to be the main opposition in Senegal till date.

Yet where power was concentrated in autocracies, leaders dealt a brutal blow to party legitimacy when they chose to cling to power and blatantly rig elections in spite of a formidable opposition. Post-communist political systems where the Colored Revolutions followed Serbia's precedent - Rose revolution in Georgia (2003) Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004) and Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan (2005) - have been typically characterized by fluidity and polarization with leading personalities from the preceding communist era having an overbearing influence over party politics. [116] In all these cases strongmen like Milosevic, were veterans of communist rule and their lengthy periods of leadership had enabled them to create entrenched personalist bases of power. President Leonid Kuchma in

[114] See Galvan 2001, 54
[115] Vengroff and Magala 2001, 129-162
[116] See Enyedi 2006, 228-239 for a theoretical discussion of parties in Post-communist systems.

Ukraine, President Edward Shevardnadze in Georgia and President Askar Akayev in Kyrgyzstan all exhibited strong tendencies of personalistic leadership.[117] In Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, political parties supporting dictators were even more fragile and fluid compared to Serbia, which at least had a solid ruling party – the SPS- in terms of grass-roots institutionalization and funding at the advent of multi-party elections.[118] For instance, the Party of Regions was created by Ukraine's Victor Yanukovych – President Kuchma's protégé- just before he decided to contest presidential elections in 2004. In all the cases just like Serbia, the opposition was strong enough to pose a formidable challenge to the regime in case of rigged elections yet the need to.[119] Yet due to concentration of power in the hands of autocratic leaders, the latter took the risk of electoral cheating to either prolong their rule or hand over power to loyalists to ensure safe exit from politics. The popular protests which followed suit and dislodged these highly unpopular regimes often had disastrous outcomes for the former incumbent autocratic parties. For instance, the Party of Regions along with other parties which had supported Yanukovych were widely discredited after the elections and Yanukovych's party had to suffer from legal battles for its involvement in electoral fraud at the hand of the new government.[120]

The recent spectacular people's power movements in North Africa and the Middle East have also demonstrated how personalist rulers leading authoritarian coalitions take the risky

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[117] McFaul 2005, 7-9

[118] See Hale 2006, 305-329 regarding strong presidencies in Post-communist countries which experienced the Colored Revolutions.

[119] In Ukraine, the opposition collectively supported Victor Yuschckenko as the presidential candidate in 2002 presidential elections. In Georgia high mobilization of civic groups like student-led Kmara (Enough!) implied that electoral cheating was not going to be condoned in 2004 parliamentary elections. Kyrgyzstan stands out from all these cases because the opposition was sharply divided across the country's difficult terrain. Nevertheless, an important opposition group by the name of People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan (NDK) had formed by nine parties in September 2004.

[120] Kuzi 2010, 34 available at <http://www.taraskuzio.net/media24_files/24.pdf>

decision of not loosening their grip of power in spite of intense popular pressure to step down. These empirical cases defy the dominant trend in current literature of comparative politics, which highlights the importance of strong institutions - political parties and legislatures - in maintaining durability of autocratic regimes in Middle East and North Africa.[121] Yet the toppling of these ostensibly stable dictatorships has demonstrated how lack of power-sharing in some of these institutions abruptly and in fact completely eviscerated them in the face of popular pressure.

When thousands of Egyptians protested in Liberation Square in the Egyptian capital of Cairo, Mubarak's refusal to step down from power clearly showed that he was leading the game rather than the ruling National Democratic Party which had been in power for over thirty years. As the momentum of the protests rose sharply and Mubarak refused to accept his fate the NDP tattered rather abruptly due to loss of legitimacy and massive elite defections. Thus future research on political science needs to focus more closely on the internal dynamics of authoritarian institutions – such an intra-party power-sharing- to test major theories on regime stability and democratization.

[121] See Smith 2007; Brownlee 2007; Gandhi and Prezworski 2007; Gandhi 2008.

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